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## University of New England's response to the National Priorities & Industry Linkages Fund consultation paper – questions for discussion

### Tiered indicators

#### ***2. How many indicators (i.e. 10, 12, or 15) might universities need to meet, to achieve the outcomes of NPILF, while also accounting for university missions?***

UNE is comfortable with three “Cross-sector metrics” indicators forming part of the agreement with the government. We suggest that the number of indicators agreed to under the “Demonstrator” and “Innovators” tier be agreed with the Department each year based on the ambition of the proposed programs and not tied to a specific number. By considering the degree of ambition proposed in Demonstrator and Innovator initiatives Universities may choose to focus on very ambitious programs (with fewer outcome measures) or take a broader approach according to need at the time. This could be subject to agreement and discussion in the annual planning process.

#### ***4. Do you agree with the metrics listed? Which are the most valuable? Would you add other metrics?***

We would note that many of the proposed metrics are lagging and not representative of the performance immediately passed. We believe consideration needs to be given to the inclusion of leading metrics, to provide a better understanding of the performance of the program during the timeframe of the agreement of which the funding decisions are being made.

We would like consideration given to a metric that reports on the number of students who are concurrently employed and engaging in higher education. We believe it is important in the spirit of lifelong learning to understand not just what happens when students finish study but how they are engaging with industry and employment while studying. Students who are concurrently working and undertaking higher education studies are often aiming to improve their value to employers.

#### ***5. To be able to measure industry linkages, is there an appetite to create a new system of data collection?***

We find the current system of data collection, as noted above, produces several lagging indicators. We would support a review to identify more leading indicators.

### Allocation methodology

#### ***6. Is the proposed mechanism for allocation appropriate as a mechanism to incentivise new behaviours in the sector? Could re-allocation be introduced earlier/not at all?***

UNE has a strong track record of industry engagement and don't believe financial incentives are necessary to promote industry engagement. We will continue to pursue industry engagement regardless of the funding mechanisms, as it is fundamental to our mission and how we operate.

## Distribution options

### **7. Which distribution method (i.e. banded; per EFTSL-rate; base; loadings) makes most sense? Or can you propose another method?**

Of the proposed options we have a preference for a distribution method based on: per EFTSL + base + loading. The scale of regional economies often requires engagement with 3 or 4 smaller partners instead of one larger organisation that may be available to metropolitan institutions. The loading would reflect the reality that regionally-based organisations often have a role in developing local industry partners' capability to engage with work integrated learning.

Priorities – WIL, STEM-skills and Industry partnerships

### **8. Do you agree with the definitions of WIL, STEM+ and Industry partnerships in the context of NPILF?**

We would suggest that the definition of STEM+ needs to reflect the importance of entrepreneurship as an essential element of Australia's future economic growth and a key skillset required to ensure students are job-ready. Entrepreneurship is a critical skill for students to engage with the workforce of the future, and create new employment opportunities and operate in a variety of non-traditional business situations.

### **10. How does a university promote WIL, and the benefits of WIL (especially new, innovative or 'remote' approaches) to SMEs and large organisations, and is there a role for Government?**

UNE believes it is leading the industry in a place-based approach to WIL as part of its Tamworth expansion plans. We have worked collaboratively with industry, business and community partners in the region to co-locate and co-create the educational offerings which have been tailored to reflect local skill shortages and cater to their future educational needs. We have ensured that SME's and large organisations are part of the process from the beginning, identifying WIL opportunities early and then embedding them into the educational offerings. The industry embedded nature of the courses will support the development of individual capability, increased attainment rates, and produce job-ready graduates.

### **11. How can universities best engage industry, particularly SMEs, with WIL?**

As with the Tamworth expansion plans mentioned above, UNE is proactive in developing innovative WIL offerings that are mutually beneficial to our students and the community. Another example of this approach is the New England Virtual Health Network (NEViHN). The NEViHN is a transformative education and healthcare network that supports the delivery of in-place healthcare for patients and in-place learning for all future UNE medicine and health students in the New England North West region. The NEViHN will enable medicine and allied health student placements in Regional, Rural and Remote (RRR) settings for longer periods, by leveraging technologies to keep students connected to specialists and mentors in metro and regional areas. This is an innovative approach to address the challenges of providing WIL in a distributed RRR setting. Working to a similar model in the creative arts sector is UNE Venue – which will create a network of placement opportunities for small business and self-employed creative artists.

### **12. How can universities help STEM+ students “think beyond the lab” and expose them to the vast employment landscape they can access?**

We believe by giving students entrepreneurial skills, they will have the ability to create the regional jobs of the future. We believe these skills are so vital to producing job-ready graduates

we are currently looking to embed entrepreneurial skills in a broad range of disciplines including STEM+.

***13. Are there specific challenges for SME's in engaging with universities that need to be addressed in the framework?***

We believe consideration could be given to providing financial incentives or other support to assist SME's to engage with more WIL programs. This assistance could be used to offset the time invested in the WIL programs which could have been a barrier to SME engagement.

**Existing practice**

***15. Does your business or university have good examples of WIL, or partnerships, which can be used as exemplars?***

As noted above, we believe NEViHN and the Tamworth expansion program are examples of innovative approaches to WIL. We would also add that the UNE SMART Region Incubator is a powerful demonstrator of how UNE is developing entrepreneurs of the future. Established in 2017, the UNE SMART Region Incubator (SRI) has supported local entrepreneurs to birth over 60 start-ups which have created more than 150 jobs and attracted over \$5.4 million in investment to the region. The UNE SRI connects business professionals, industry experts, researchers, venture capitalists and experienced entrepreneurs with start-ups, who are encouraged to work hard, build smart, fail well and pivot fast. It is the valuable lessons and skills being demonstrated daily at the UNE SRI which we believe needs to be embedded in all our courses to ensure we have are producing job-ready graduates.

**General**

***16. Does the framework sufficiently address the lifetime of learning challenge facing the workforce?***

As noted above, we would ask that consideration be given to metrics that capture the number of students who are concurrently in employment.

***17. Does the 12 month NPILF cycle (as set out above) allow enough time to implement and report on activities?***

No. We believe a 12-month cycle would leave insufficient time to make notable progress on key indicators, especially if lagging metrics are to be used. We would ask that consideration be given to a less frequent, more comprehensive review cycle.

***18. Do you have any other feedback or comments?***

No further feedback/comments.

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